

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-52 (Canceled)

Please cancel claims 35-52.

~~53. (New) A process for treating artefacts comprising the following steps in sequence:~~

providing an envelope formed from a transfer support which is adapted to receive the artefact;

sucking air from an open end of said envelope to cause said transfer support to adhere to both sides of said artefact wherein said transfer support is made from a gas tight thermoformable material; and

transferring a pattern from said transfer support to both sides of said artefact by heating said artefact and said transfer support and applying pressure to said pattern in contact with said artefact;

wherein said step of providing said envelope comprises forming said envelope from said transfer support so that said open end is defined by edge portions of said transfer support;

and wherein during said sucking step, said envelope is so arranged as to retain flexibility along its periphery, thereby allowing said pressure to be applied to said pattern directly by said transfer support.

*2* 54. (New) The process as in claim 53, wherein said transfer support comprises a first sheet placed above said artefact and a second sheet placed under said artefact.

*3* 55. (New) The process according to claim 53, further comprising the step of removing said transfer support from said artefact after handling and installing the artefact.

*4* 56. (New) The process as in claim 56, wherein said gas tight thermoformable plastic material is constituted by polyvinyl alcohol.

*5* 57. (New) The process as in claim 56, wherein after said sucking step, the process further comprises the step of submitting said artefact and said transfer support to a first intermediate heating action at a temperature at which said transfer support is thermoformed.

*6* 58. (New) The process as in claim 54, wherein said heating

step occurs at a temperature between 200°C and 230°C.

7. 59. (New) The process as in claim 53, wherein said heating step lasts for a time between 30 seconds and 30 minutes.

8. 60. (New) An apparatus for treating artefacts comprising:

enclosing means for enclosing an artefact into an envelope formed from a transfer support;

sucking means for sucking air from an open end of said envelope to cause said transfer support to adhere to said artefact, wherein said transfer support is made from a gas tight thermoformable material;

heating means for heating said artefact and said transfer support to transfer a pattern from said transfer support to said artefact; and

pressing means for applying pressure to said pattern in contact with said artefact to transfer said pattern onto said artefact;

wherein said enclosing means comprises forming means

arranged for forming said envelope from said transfer support so that said open end is defined by edge portions of said transfer support;

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and wherein said pressing means comprises said transfer support which is provided with a flexible peripheral region arranged so as to allow said pressure to be directly applied by said transfer support to said pattern when air is sucked from said open end.